

A Hobbit among Wizards
On Becoming an Almost Mormon-Essayist

Ian R. Harvey
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A story of my short life as a wannabe Mormon intellectual, because maybe I didn't wannabe for all the wrong reasons.¹ Now I simply seek a fellowship with the wizards, strong men, elves and dwarves willing to assist me carrying a little ring to Mordor. No big deal...

Actually, I am just a part-time cattle rancher who has always claimed Wyoming as home whenever the discussion suggested that I was about to be shoved into a stereotypical box if I were to confess coming from Utah. Though Davis County, Utah is where the deep family roots brought my family in time for me to attend secondary schools (and where I later returned to raise my own kids), I felt justified in the inevitable impressed “oh!” response because the ranch was in Wyoming, and that is where I spent my summers, my Saturdays and my vacation days; and it is truly where my heart lies.

So I am a rather simple fellow of earth, gardens, animals and bees, with simple faith and a vocabulary mostly consistent with what Siri can translate into words so as to keep me from having to type with my thumbs. The deviations from that basic vocabulary are first in the tendency of my mind nearly to spill the harmless cowboy words that are always so near to my tongue, and then in my engineering training which has reinforced my natural distaste for paradox and a tendency to search for congruity from within paradox. While much of my life has been spent searching for the connections that must exist between natural and spiritual truths, this story is about my simple faith, best associated with that of Nephi: I will go and do the things the Lord has commanded, for I know that He gives no commandment without preparing a way for it to be fulfilled (see 1 Ne 3:7). So in spite of being a child of paradox—with a skeptic, Jack-Mormon, scientist dad and a faithful, spiritual artist mother—love for Gospel and the prophets and apostles of the restoration, testimony and church activity always have come very easy to me.²

Prowling through the Marriott Library stacks³ as an undergraduate at the U of U, discovering bound volumes of old *Dialogue* magazines and sitting cross-legged in the aisle to plough through them, I found treasures that included a fascinating history by David Buerger of the Adam-God theory.⁴ This piqued my interest because in Institute I had recently come to my only real questioning of doctrine, in raised-eyebrow learning that God was somehow unable to keep His own promises (e.g., *joy* from our first parent's ability to multiply and replenish) *while* His children were in the Garden of Eden. That they were *unable* to procreate there was a hard thing for me to fathom. That God had commanded them (thou shalt not; I forbid) not to partake of the dark fruit, but had secretly intended precisely the opposite was an even harder pill to swallow. The suggestion that God used Lucifer to manipulate our parents into obeying Lucifer because it was His intent and there was *no other way* stunned and confused me. Buerger did a fantastic job of tracing what seemed a wild history of a dogmatic precept, but never really confronted what I felt were the core, underlying paradoxical assumptions persisting to this day, suggesting there was *no other way*.

Recently I came to *Dialogue* on a quest, with badly written essays in hand, and a plea for assistance to help me write something suitable for publication. There was never a motivation to get my name in print or to become part of the intellectual community, but I felt I had an important question to raise, and opening the discussion (believing others would come to similar conclusions as I had), would serve as a means to sort of ‘crowd-source’ the enlightenment and hopefully raise the awareness among the leaders I supported.

Dialogue is aptly named: It seems a cacophony of published conversations among a relatively small community of academics who quote each other as the ideas mature from nascent to fully fleshed-out, almost-settled Mormon philosophies. *Dialogue* is not new to my family either. My great uncle Sam Taylor used to submit pieces periodically about life in polygamy around the time of the manifesto, much to the chagrin of most of his half-siblings, and to the delight of the branch I belonged to. Dad had also read heavily in *Dialogue*, along with Lighthouse publications,⁵ while I was on my mission. My dad and his dad before him were both avid readers of unsanitized history, so I gained an appreciation for *Dialogue* as a respected source of objective information about the Church.

Flashing back to Institute, I feasted on every possible course offered by Reed C. Durham and John M. Madsen while occasionally experimenting with other courses along the way accidentally to graduating from Institute. These good men stimulated my mind with testimony and questions and possibilities and scriptural understanding that I cherished as I prepared for my mission. But I also recall coming home from an Institute class having been taught the doctrine of the fall, and asking my recently returned missionary roommate how to reconcile the questions I referred to previously. My roomie, James P. Allen, was the closest I had ever come to meeting a contemporary Mormon intellectual, and I idolized him. He was an avid reader of history and he amazed me with stories of the research he had done as a missionary: He had the entire set of *History of the Church* and *Journal of Discourses* on his mission, and those books did not sit idly in his luggage awaiting the next transfer. Jim listened to my panicked concerns with a wry smile and a twinkle in his eye and said only one thing, leaving me slack-jawed and speechless, and setting me on the quest I pursue to this day: “Bob, have you ever considered that we might be living in Plan B?”

I have considered that thought many times over the years, finally coming to feel capable of articulating the simplicity on the far side of complexity⁶ representing a rejection of the face-value statements of Eve in rationalizing her actions, and a face-value acceptance of God’s words in the temple, having being captivated many times in the pre-endowment by the thou-shalt-not commandment punctuated with “I forbid it!”

Speaking of Institute, and jumping all over the historical timeline to 2009, I had been teaching engineering courses that I had developed from my experiences working in the computer chip industry, loving the interactions with the students and feeling like I was making a difference, when my Dean asked me to set aside teaching and focus on building a new set of nanotechnology laboratories that would serve the College of Engineering, other colleges at the university, and indeed, other universities around the state and region. One evening as I was sulking over losing my teaching role and also wondering where the R&D department existed within the church, I happened to be in sight of the Salt Lake Institute where I had a simultaneous

tender flashback to Brother Durham and a minor *Aha!* experience that promptly sent me across the street to volunteer as an evening Institute teacher.⁷ That wonderfully satisfying experience as an instructor importantly resulted in the fleshing-out of the scriptural puzzle from Jim's Plan B hypothesis of so many years before.

Another respected individual more recently spent about 30 minutes explaining to me that our first parents were married in what was basically pre-pubescence, and that the forbidden /fortunate fruit was necessary to effect the changes in their bodies that would render them fertile. I find this type of rationalization still to miss a very big point and I am afraid it confirms to me the necessity to convey here another deeply personal experience, because without this type of background it may be difficult to see eating the forbidden fruit as inherently sinful...

My dad and his brother had a very complicated relationship. They were bitter sibling rivals with strong feelings of animus extending into adulthood, never being dealt with but rather added upon. Both men reluctantly returned to the family farm at different times after schooling, professional and military periods away from home; but the competitive and bitter mutual feelings arose frequently in vile shouting and screaming matches with both parties turning purple in the face, veins bulging. But blood and the partnership in the growing ranch kept them together in metastable conflict. As my brothers and I demonstrated interest in the ranch, my dad and uncle decided amicably to part ways in the ranch via "I cut, you choose". One brother got the upstream side of the road and the other got the downstream side. But my uncle could not run his stake by himself, so he decided to lease it.

In an unimaginable turn of events my uncle denied dad's request to lease the ranch from him (the ranches were joined by complicated interdependent watering systems) and instead leased his portion to a man with a broad reputation as a liar and a cattle thief. It is said that a person forfeits the right to be angry when a situation is clearly predictable. Over the next few years dad watched in contempt as the man predictably abused my uncle's ranch: overgrazing, killing trees, under watering, never fixing a fence. We kept a close eye on our animals and sustained a stunned disbelief in my uncle's apathy.

It was also difficult to cover up in the small community, the sordid circumstances surrounding the son of the lessee—a cattle truck driver—and his estranged wife: The trucker was driving down Echo Canyon, loaded, when he observed his wife's car going the same direction. Maliciously he used his truck to intimidate and harass her with growing speeds peaking over 90 mph. Ignoring the curves in the canyon and the shifting load of the animals, with murder in his heart he tried to force her off the road, but in doing so lost control of his own rig, closing the road for hours and costing the lives of many animals (many killed in the wreck, many euthanized by officers), but amazingly (and apparently accidentally) without loss of human life.

At some point my uncle gave the management of his ranch to his son, and my cousin grew tired of the abuse of his ranch and gave the lessees notice to leave, offering us the lease instead. I was there that closing day with my dad, who, in the absence of his brother or my cousin, put himself in a position to prevent what he knew would be happening: the final rape of the ranch. Indeed when we arrived in the tractor, the thief and liar were busy packing away whatever was not tied

down, preparing to haul away our old truck. Dad let them know in no polite or uncertain terms they were to get out and leave everything where it was. Two other heated exchanges later that morning resulted in purple faces, shouts and threats, blue language to make a sailor blush, guns being drawn, and sheriffs and highway patrol converging from 40 miles away. That evening another sheriff came by the house to talk with dad while I was there. There were no official statements, but I had the opportunity to tell the officer how dad had faced down a thief, liar and attempted murderer. The officer knew my dad from morning coffee, that he is a good and honorable man. His job was to see to it that this was the end of one story and the beginning of another. When the officer left, dad looked at me kindly and offered his deep appreciation for my loyalty— for backing him up. Since I had said what I said in full sincerity, and since my part in the day was to prevent people from killing each other and to maintain some semblance of nonviolence, I guess I was shocked to hear dad thank me... because I had earlier been actively working to talk him down, which might have been construed as not, in fact, backing him up.

Why do I share this at the risk of alienating my own family? Sometimes we don't understand a concept unless we have lived through it or experienced it by proxy, perhaps through the telling of stories. It's like Harry Potter being able to see the mournful looking horse-like magical flying beasts, the thestral, invisible to all others who have not themselves witnessed death.⁸ In my case I did not understand what betrayal truly was, until I experienced it myself and witnessed the rage it produced. Betrayal is an unforgivable sin in the most extreme case. During our pre-earth spiritual lives, we did witness the betrayal of 1/3 of our beloved brothers and sisters who had been in the presence of Father, felt His love, known His goodness; and yet for fear or beguiling they betrayed Him in favor of a liar and a murderer.⁹ That sin was unforgivable. They are lost with no hope of return. Jesus Himself rejected the temptation to betray when presented with stones that He might turn to bread. The potential sin was not because of the stones or the possibility of bread, but because of the one who sought his obeisance—the one who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. The potential sin was *betrayal of righteousness and light*.

My dad was enraged by the betrayal of his now-deceased brother and has never yet made peace with this act. He still experiences nightmares thinking about blood ties, common roots, common bonds, a shared name and heritage— and willful betrayal of honesty and good will for the sake of a known liar, thief and would-be murderer. Shall we minimize the sin in the Garden of Eden as God's *intention*, or as a *necessity* when our parents turned their back on pure righteousness in favor of seeking wisdom from the father of all lies, in whom there is no truth, the one who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning? (see John 8:44)

Moses 7:32 The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency <<in front of the two trees>>;

33 And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood;

34 And the fire of mine indignation is kindled against them; <<no wonder!>> and in my hot displeasure will I send in the floods upon them, for my fierce anger is kindled against them.

“Indignation... hot displeasure... fierce anger...” These are no idle phrases given in the first person from our Eternal God. I have seen my father, capable of love, tenderness and with a talent for giving, turn to justified rage because of betrayal. It is no hard thing for me to visualize a loving, kind, compassionate Father in Heaven, so free with gifts, light and forgiveness share those same raging emotions when His children willfully turn away from him after having known Him and felt of His love and goodness, forsaking light and paying obeisance and honor to the one who had made himself God’s eternal enemy.

Mosiah 2:36 And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom’s paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved—

37 I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an enemy to all righteousness; therefore, the Lord has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in unholy temples.

To me, this is all about the nature of God and the nature of moral agency.¹⁰ I know that my Heavenly Father is a loving God, ever righteous from all eternity to all eternity, unchanging in his trustworthiness and His ability to keep His promises. I know that He never subjected himself to the will of an adversary, and never needed a savior Himself. (See John 5:19,20). I also know that moral agency is the gift presented to our first parents when they were placed in front of the two trees: The opportunity to choose good or evil, light or darkness, life or death. In fact it was the choice to become like God and receive the fullness of joy, or to become like Lucifer: bodiless, miserable, cast from the presence of God. God commanded and expected they would choose Him, but true agency meant that He would not interfere even if they were to unimaginably choose the worst possible case: betrayal, exile, sorrow, suffering, death. ...*it <agency> is given unto thee to choose, but remember, I forbid it <choosing death>.*

Where did the other puzzle pieces come from? I am just a slow and very simple guy who spends a long time figuring out what the relevant questions are. As an example, I think of the time I was waiting for my wife to emerge from the Oakland temple dressing room after an endowment session. I noticed that the temple president’s office door, directly attached to the waiting room foyer, was open. I knocked quietly and was graciously invited in. I doubt I introduced my conundrum very eloquently if I did so at all. I just recall having asked whether we should believe Lucifer when he tells us in the pre-ordinance contextual portrayal of the Fall, “there is no other way.” I also recall that he became somewhat reflective in his thoughts, before replying “well, in this one case, it seems we should.” His answer was consistent with every Sunday school lesson and conference talk, but inconsistent with every statement by apostles and prophets regarding the ever righteous, ever trustworthy nature of God. And his answer did nothing to allay my concerns or to stimulate any sort of spiritual witness. By contrast, on another occasion, I was sitting next to Bishop Ridgwell during the session. I leaned over to him as Lucifer told us

“...that is the way Father gained his knowledge” and said “*That* is a lie.” He amazed and thrilled me moments later when he leaned over just prior to “there is no other way” and whispered “Here comes another whopper!”

The restlessness of wondering whom to believe (and whom I should ask for advice *about* whom to believe) dominated my thoughts for many weeks leading up to and including my sabbatical¹¹ which I spent in the Wyoming hayfields putt-putting around on a tractor deep in thought while great swaths of native grasses fell in beautiful mounded windrows behind me. Whom to believe among all the expert witnesses and folks wearing white hats? Eve? Lehi? Many, many modern prophets and apostles beginning with Brigham Young? The Temple President? The Bishop?

What a horribly awkward position to be in, when it all boils down to *either* believing the words of beloved apostles and prophets,¹² leaders and teachers, *or* believing the words of God at face value. I really doubt that I am alone in this entangled conundrum. It’s just that we don’t talk about it. It is my hope and agenda, to introduce the conversation because I am convinced of the good that will result when people of good will understand the problem facing them in the Temple: *Shall I believe God, or shall I believe Lucifer?*

I can point to the exact spot in the meadow where I finally came to the conclusion that there was no individual I might believe to tell me whom I should believe... ..It was surely *my choice*. It was strictly up to me to decide whether to believe any or all of these in the white hats who unwittingly subscribed to Lucifer’s philosophy, or to *believe God* at face value. Once the question was framed in the light of my own agency, it was also very clear that no more rumination was even necessary. The tractor had barely advanced another five or ten feet before I made my decision: *I choose to believe God at face value, in spite of any and all other ramifications*. That would have been enough for me, except for the thrill that accompanied the simultaneous witness of the Spirit attesting to the correctness of the decision.¹³

Which brings me back to the present, wanting to open a conversation, not knowing how, and trusting in the intellectual Mormon community to be willing to entertain a simple observation from a simple hobbit. After more rejections than I can count on household fingers and toes as I refined my message, an inspired break not dissimilar to the one that landed me in an instructor role in Institute, had Boyd Petersen referring me to a member of his *Dialogue* editorial board, Tom Rogers. That's pretty much what I needed in an editorial reviewer: a restless retired renaissance insomniac! To Tom’s great credit and to the credit of the mission of *Dialogue*, he never suggested that *Dialogue* would be unwilling to publish my thoughts, even though he personally did not buy into my thesis or accept my agenda-driven writing style.

I had never aspired to be an essay writer, being quite satisfied with my career in science and technology. Tom is so compassionate and so gentle, with such a Christ-like attitude having been refined from years of polishing the rough spots off of BYU Honors students and missionaries attempting to speak Russian. It took a bit of effort to convince Tom that I had no illusions about my becoming conversant using words like didactic, erudite, prescient, limn; or that I actually did not aspire to the fine art that is Mormon essay writing. Instead I felt I simply had something important to say.

We spoke of paradox and Tom had me scratching my head for quite a number of days contemplating social scientist Jacob Burckhardt's statement, "The essence of tyranny is the denial of complexity." To the best of my ability, I think this is a reference to how tyrants become such by oversimplifying complex social (and other) systems, or by attempting artificially to purge those systems of intrinsic complexity. However, I worried that such an approach seemed to rely on blaming, removing ultimate responsibility from self and rationalizing passivity. Instead, as I apply Burckhardt's notion to my problem-at-hand, I see the following: When *we* as individuals or as a culture deny the complexity of the fall by accepting Lehi's and (therefore) Eve's and (therefore) Lucifer's statements at face value, which all contradict God's words by suggesting there was no other way to procreate (or to gain wisdom, knowledge, understanding or experience), then *we* enable the greatest tyranny of all time and space by enthroning Lucifer as the god of this world. *Our* failure to see complexity results in the tyranny of blood and horror on this earth in stark contrast to the justice, truth and peace that extends from each of the other divine creations all the way to the very throne of God itself. (Moses 7:29-36) We should be feeling pretty lonely in the fallen, mortal state we are so collectively proud of — and which we are so good at rationalizing— the nothingness of man that Moses was privy to in his vision. (Moses 1:10)

Perhaps the reader will be startled at my assessment of the potential impact of this small thing I call Lucifer's Great Lie. And I have relied on pop culture references to make several points, which is a decidedly unintellectual thing to do, I confess. But while I will not assign any divine inspiration to either Tolkien or Rowling¹⁴, or to my application of their work, I do strongly believe that C.S. Lewis was profoundly inspired in his application of the humanity figure Lucy finally seeking out the savior figure Aslan after having seen and acknowledged Him but having failed to follow what she knew to be correct and to seek him prior to the time when the urgency of war, suffering and death of dear ones brought her to desperation. In Prince Caspian, Lucy finally and determinedly seeks and finds Aslan. Her siblings and her people are elsewhere in most urgent need as Aslan loves her, forgives her, but tenderly chides her for her lack of trust back when times were not so desperate and when options abounded. Lewis then speaks to us in the most profound terms through Aslan, echoing in the simplest terms the divine test of truth we have elsewhere in D&C 93:24,25:

"You mean," said Lucy rather faintly "that it would have turned out all right— somehow? But how? Please Aslan, am I not to know?"

"To know what *would have happened*, child?" said Aslan. "No, nobody is ever told that. But anyone can find out what *will* happen."

—C.S. Lewis in The Chronicles of Narnia, Book 4, Prince Caspian, p.142, Scholastic 1995 (emphasis in original)

Tom expressed how bold and audacious it was for me to think about correcting the Brethren, when it is culturally settled that all truth runs downhill. I view it as neither bold nor audacious, nor even as *correcting* the Brethren. I am still at a very significant loss trying to come up with a suitable metaphor that explains the awkwardness of unbidden suggestions to people I love and sustain and who are very seriously exposed and whose authority is thus compromised.¹⁵ I seek a

metaphor that expresses my desire to convey a gift of love to the Brethren that will bring true spiritual power back again to the church and to prevent their further embarrassment by having them unwittingly but very publicly advocating and continuing to expand¹⁶ a doctrine that when boiled down to the basics has us secretly—albeit unwittingly—worshiping Satan in our temples by enshrining his doctrines in absolute preference to the commandments of God.

*The Lineage of the Lie*¹⁷ is my scriptural tearing-down of Lucifer's lies, one-at-a-time, and subsequent building-up of the truth which takes for granted the Savior's characterization of our eternal adversary—that there is no truth in him since he was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. He (Lucifer) is the father of untruth. (see John 8:44) The great Lie was forged in the dark shade of the deceiver's tree set in the midst of the sacred garden, and it is to that place that the Lie must be returned, even as the One Ring to Mordor, because only in the temple may we demonstrate our refusal to accept his slippery speeches and deny his requests for us both to acknowledge and obey.¹⁸

There is still strength among men. I trust our leaders and our people. I trust that when this conversation opens up and it becomes acceptable to speak freely about what Lucifer says in the temple, then will our people realize the nature of the test first given to our parents and now as the same test to us. I trust that our people will choose the words of life and reject the adversary.

After having worked for many years and having been rebuffed in every attempt to convey the message *Choose Life!* up through the priesthood line, I bear tidings of The One Lie, *there is no other way*, as a simple hobbit among the wizards, and suggest the means to destroy it.¹⁹

*Three lies for the first-Flesh under the sky,
Ten for the mother of all in her halls of vine,
Four for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his would-be throne
In the second estate, creating havoc there.
One Lie to rule them all, One Lie to find them,
One Lie to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.
In the Temple creating shadow there.*

* * *

The Hobbit's Lament

Have the enemies so overwhelmed
that a fortress of policies is built
ne'er distinguishing friend from foe?

Are we so busy administering
the *status quo*
that we have no time to prepare
for the return of the King?

What kind of stewards shall we be?
Or shall we rather be Priests and Priestesses
of the Most High?

Does all knowledge flow down
as scraps from the table?
Are not the halflings also receptive
to pure light?

Are gifts of the hands
or pocket
valued in the towers above,
but gifts of the mind feared,
or gifts of the Spirit envied?

Do policies ever rule the day?
Or is there still a place
for the promptings of the Spirit?

Has the din outside the window
become so loud
that no one hears
the tapping at the door
of the small hobbit
bearing tidings of the battle?

When will we trade
the fig leaves
of betrayal
for the palm fronds
of true praise?

Notes

¹ I have already exposed my preference for popular literature, though in my defense, I read The Lord of the Rings several times before the Peter Jackson movies became blockbuster hits.

² The exceptions have pulled at me from the farm and ranch, when my dad needed help. But for the most part he has been tolerant of my choice to remain active in the church.

³ The only other thing I remember from those long days sitting between the stacks when I should have been studying, was discovering another bound volume: the Journal of Sexology, which I devoured with the same wonder and enthusiasm as when responding to the amazing Mrs. Vivian Beatty's injunction to the 11th grade about how the class should *not* read Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale"!

⁴ David John Buerger, "The Adam-God Doctrine", *Dialogue* v15 #1, 1976

⁵ Dad respected Jerald Tanner as a determined, thorough and relatively objective historical researcher, and felt that (Jerald's wife) Sandra's editorial commentary was so much B.S.

⁶ Stephen R. Covey adapted from Oliver Wendell Holmes: "*I wouldn't give a plugged nickel for the simplicity on this side of complexity; but I would give my right arm for the simplicity on the far side of complexity.*" I was at a particularly vulnerable time in my spiritual life when I was sent away by my company to a (secular) corporate leadership training through the Covey Leadership Institute. Of course the Mormon intellectual crowd will not be overly impressed with Stephen R. Covey, having apparently sold himself out to popular philosophy, but I was in a receptive state of mind having privately, prayerfully asked the question "should I believe what Lucifer tells me in the temple?" I experienced some of the most profound spiritual affirmations of my life during that leadership training (in principles, paradigms, paradox and proactive alignment of life with truth) that placed me on the quest I am on now: first finding my voice then raising the courage to say that there is a timeless and unchanging truth in the nature of God and the nature of moral agency. Paradox in either of these does not reflect an intrinsic problem with the natures of God, agency or truth, but instead reflects inadequate or incorrect understanding of those, by each of us.

In my training with Covey, he also paid homage to H.L. Mencken: "*For every problem there is a solution that is simple, obvious and wrong.*" So as I adapt these thoughts to my thesis that God is trustworthy and Lucifer is not, then I find the following connection with Burckhardt's truism linking tyranny with the denial of complexity: Lucifer's current tyrannical reign is largely due to Mormonism's cultural acceptance of the simple, obvious and wrong; and is also due to our collective inability to see the complexity behind Moses 5:11, 2 Ne 2:22-24 and Lucifer's words in the temple pre-endowment (failing to render to each a face value interpretation as false). Likewise we fail to see the simple (face value) *truth* in Jesus' statement (Jn 8:44) that there is "no truth in" the one who was a "liar and a murderer from the beginning." We therefore cannot see the simplicity (and the face-value truth) in God's first commandment to His son, even before Eve appears in the scene, in Moses 3:16,17 "Of every tree of the garden, thou mayest freely eat..." The result is therefore the greatest tyranny ever imposed upon all the creations of God's vast portfolio. Yes, *we* have indeed traded complexity for ultimate tyranny.

⁷ I am grateful for the support of the director of volunteer instructors, Bro. Tom Thunnell for seeing something in me worth taking a chance on when the program was cutting back on the use of volunteers—when he had a whole stable to choose from. I'm also grateful to my Stake President, Kelly Johnson, for supporting me. Preparing the lessons for that class was indeed a

laboratory for developing some very key concepts coming ultimately to fruition as a six-part Essay “Choose Life: The Principles of Moral Agency”.

⁸ Sorry... another irresistible popular reference to books I loved reading with or without my kids: J.K. Rowling’s seven part Harry Potter series (Scholastic).

⁹ D&C 76:31 *Thus saith the Lord concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power—*
32 *They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born;*
33 *For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity;*
34 *Concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come—*
35 *Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame.*
36 *These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels—*
37 *And the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power;*
38 *Yea, verily, the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his wrath.*

¹⁰ There is no prophet, apostle or general authority that would advocate believing Lucifer and obeying his lies during waking moments outside the temple. The paradox and contradiction then is why we do so in the single, isolated instance of the temple ceremony. I believe it is because it is said *inside* the temple, and because we do not culturally speak of it, we have therefore come to accept that everything said inside the sacred walls is actually true, no matter who is speaking. This is, in fact, according to prophecy per 2 Thess 2:3-11. Ultimately the correction is to realize that the test that was given to our first parents when presented with the two trees, is the same test now given to us. We also have to decide whether to believe God’s words at face value in the garden temple, or to rather betray Him and continue to justify Lucifer’s words as true in any way, then to don and retain the emblem of his ownership.

¹¹ A very nice perk of four weeks additional paid leave for having worked five years for the company.

¹² It would be very easy to interpret my intent as criticism of individuals among the leadership of the church, but that is very far from my intent. The scriptures instead clearly point to the false tradition of our fathers. In D&C 93 we have the test of truth in v.23 which clearly indicates why the unbiased Moses 5:11 rendition of Eve’s opinion conveys her *false* rationalization; and why Lehi’s supposition (2Ne 2:17) after having read and believed Eve’s hypothetical conjecture (1 Ne 5:11) is likewise false (Lehi’s words in 2 Ne 2:22-24 are therefore aberrant). D&C 93:25 clearly attributes these hypothetical lies to the father of lies, then the subsequent verses trace the loss of light to our own day (v.31, 38, 39) through the false tradition of our fathers. In the book

Genealogy of the Lie, the *restoration* of the lie (Acts 3:21; D&C 27:6 as originally spoken by the mouth of the holy prophet Lehi) comes back to us through the prophet Brigham Young, in the form of the Adam-God doctrine, which was almost completely purged—all that is, except for the core untruth that our parents were unable to procreate unless they partook of the forbidden fruit.

¹³ The addendum to that story occurred when I had returned home to Livermore and was once again alone in my thoughts with time to ponder and reflect while Kris had the kids in mouseland (I had begged off, claiming I had spent too much time away from work!). I was formulating another question around a thought that had been bothering me: If Father did not intend for His children to partake of the forbidden fruit in order to obtain knowledge, wisdom and understanding, then what is the divinely prescribed method for Him to dispense wisdom and understanding? Scripture searching led ultimately to the book of Job (28) which seemed to be written just for my personal question: *"But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living (v.12,13). Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air (v.20,21). God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof (v.23). Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea and searched it out. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (v.27,28 emphasis added).* Once again, the experience was accompanied by a powerful witness of the Spirit, but this time, hot on the heels of the spiritual high was the terrifying awareness of a dark and angry presence in the room with me, that had to be rebuked through the priesthood in order for me to be freed from that suffocating power.

¹⁴ And I suspect that both of these authors would be strongly opposed to any suggestion that they had written an allegory with deeper meaning.

¹⁵ I hope that only those who really care will bother to read this footnote, so I can only come up with a crude analogy, and with it my sincere apologies. I view my actions as manning up to someone I respect, support and love, in order to let him know his fly is open.

¹⁶ Case-in-point is the evolution of the overdramatized temple films that recently show Eve and/or Adam casting about as if praying for guidance and then receiving the affirming divine authorization to disobey God's own commandment.

¹⁷ The name of the book, yet to be published, that traces the origins of Paul's prophesied "the Lie" ("there is no other way") from Lucifer's lips inside our temples, through Eve's rationalizations as objectively conveyed in Moses 5:11 and in the temple (tested for verity against D&C 93:24,25; D&C 58:10), through Lehi's confused suppositions (1 Ne 5:11, 2Ne 2:17, 22-24) after having read Eve in Moses' account. Is that sufficient complexity? The false dogma of mortality-induced fertility then dies altogether in the scriptures. The prophesied strong delusion (2 Thess 2:3-11) that mortality was necessary for procreation is then shown to be restored, as with all other things spoken by the mouths of holy prophets. So it comes to us as individual moral agents to choose whether we too will be taken in by the delicious-to-the-taste

lies of the adversary who would beguile us to choose his death, or whether we will prefer to take the straight gate and narrow way leading to eternal life.

¹⁸ Consider the real meaning of the fig apron we don at the deceiver's behest. Consider how proud he is to have us demonstrate our continued belief in his lies and our demonstration of his ownership that he can so arrogantly display to the one who paid him such a great ransom?

¹⁹ Of course, with apologies and much gratitude to J.R.R. Tolkien.